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ABSTRACT

This essay suggests a foreign language (FL) pedagogy for teaching literature to beginning students that creates strong readers equipped with strategies to undertake independent interpretations of literary works. It endorses a top-down processing that teaches students to attend to patterns of textual messages. Students use an "r+l" approach (the "r" component assumes a reading process that reconstructs the macropatterns of a text out of recognizable details, and the "l" component is reflected in the discovery process that this reconstruction involves). Students learn to reconstruct macropatterns through a discovery process that explicitly encourages them to try out their own hypotheses. In this discovery process, which involves language exercises that are in textual context, the teacher serves as a guide rather than an expert. The paper emphasizes that there are no right answers, just processes of reading. It shows how students can learn to consider objectively the space between what a text says and what a reader perceives it to say. It asserts that using this approach makes novice readers aware of the possible discrepancies between their expectations and the information in a literary text, thereby integrating literary study into language acquisition. (Contains 25 references.) (SM)

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Reading the Patterns of Literary Works: Strategies and Teaching Techniques

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This essay suggests a foreign language (FL) pedagogy for teaching literature to create a strong reader, a reader equipped with strategies to undertake independent interpretations of literary works.[1] The premise underlying these suggestions originates in the conviction that the difficulties foreign language students face stem not only from a language barrier, but also from practices common in *first* language reading (L1). In many English classes, students read for details that support model readings and teacher interpretations. Few teachers train their students to apply independently top-down processes that yield interpretations.

For students who lack advanced language proficiency and extensive FL background knowledge, however, the strategies for interpretive, top-down processing of texts prove particularly helpful (Swaffar, Arens, and Byrnes 1991). Teaching top-down strategies for global processing of textual detail can help FL readers compensate for insufficient language mastery by prompting them to apply the organizing tools found in leading literary theories, notably post-structuralism, semiotics, deconstruction, and reception theories.

Teaching students to apply such tools involves very different approaches than those needed to interpret, however. While this distinction has not been adequately addressed in research, indications support the claim that using theory and teaching others to use it involve different pedagogical strategies. Precisely because literary theory is the mainstay of a great deal of graduate study and subsequent publication for those in the field of literary and cultural studies, our discipline has presumed that teachers know how to instruct students in applying these theories to better comprehend what they read. But often what is taught is the teacher's application of the theory, a finished interpretation, not the operational theory, the theory as reading strategy (Marshall, Smagorinsky, and Smith 1995).

Teachers who use operational theory, who teach students how to apply theory as top-down reading processes, engage students in reading textual information as a system of meaning, as features of textual events, ideas, institutions, or characters that relate to one another.

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Many students, whether in L1 or L2 (second language), find their study of literature frustrated by encounters with unfamiliar social and psychological references. Particularly with a work written in a foreign language, readers may find themselves unable to connect ideas even when they understand most of the individual words on the page. Misreading, initial misapprehension of how the gist of a story relates to its details, can distort a reader's entire comprehension of a work (Bernhardt 1990).

Theory becomes operational when, for example, it forestalls misreading by helping students recognize unfamiliar contexts and behaviors as reflecting a macro system different from the one *they* expect, based on *their* experience. If called to the reader's attention, orientation to a story's global patterns, its consistent discourses and narrative structures, can forestall misreading. A misreading of a single word will be less likely to confound an understanding of events or ideas in a literary work when readers grasp its macropatterns.

The suggestions for teaching the reading of literary works presented in this article rest on two interlocking assumptions about how English and FL teachers generally present literature: (1) that we fail to help students learn how to identify and systematize macropatterns of texts in meaningful ways, and (2) that literary messages consequently remain obscure to students because they lack strategies with which to articulate their readings or bridge their own lack of expertise in critical assessment. Another way of making these claims is to assert that, while absolute or ultimate readings do not exist, absolute texts do (*pace* Stanley Fish [1980] who denies the materiality of the text).

And while it is pleasant to react to texts and discuss their emotional impact, speculation and reactive readings generally will, as initial reading responses, ultimately inhibit stronger, more organized perception about what a text says. Rule one of text-based reading: structure classes to avoid misreading by teaching students to attend to one pattern of textual messages. Their own background knowledge can inform those messages, but only *after* they examine what the text actually states and how it organizes those statements—as chronological events, causal arguments, problems and solutions, contrasts or comparisons, and descriptions.

Cognitive scientists have proposed that reading is a process in which the reader reconstructs textual meaning (Rumelhart 1977; Samuels and Kamil 1984). Consequently, in the approach to reading I suggest here, the teacher avoids telling students how to reconstruct the text. Instead, s/he structures reading in-class and out by asking students to find patterns in textual language and structure. In this

pedagogy, teachers assist students initially by helping them identify appropriate macropatterns and the details that support and lend dimensionality to those patterns. Their ultimate goal will be to turn readers into independent, articulate interpreters of literary and other texts: that is, readers capable of finding macropatterns without help from an instructor.

In foreign language classes, this approach empowers students as potential strong readers and interpreters by showing them how to uncover the global or macropatterns of a text—the essential first stage in reconstruction of a longer text. The pedagogy involved presents students with an "r + 1" (the reconstruction made in the process of identifying the way the text arranges student-selected detail into consistent patterns), a reader variant of Krashen's "i + 1" (Krashen 1985; Krashen 1989). The "r" component assumes a reading process that reconstructs the macropatterns of a text out of recognizable details. The "+ 1" component is reflected in the discovery process that this reconstruction involves. Students who identify the way the text arranges the detail in its episodes or character depictions will glean new insights into the larger messages of a work.

Importantly, whatever macropatterns the teacher chooses to emphasize, the principle of adding only one additional element to what the students already know must apply. The literary theory behind that macropattern must clarify for students what they can grasp and, implicitly, the unknown language or ideas they need not worry about at this point in their FL reading of literature. For example, the macropatterns might reflect post-structural ideas (institutionalized behaviors and their resultant impact on members of that society), semiotics (characteristics or markers of one group compared to those of another), deconstruction (the presence and relative absence of features and what that implies), or reception theory (coalescing textual information about people or events to identify patterns and the reader's or the public's response to those patterns). Working deductively, I will model a sequence for a beginner or first year FL class that applies semiotic theory.

To forestall the fear that reading literature is a hurdle surmountable only for readers possessing extensive language skills, early, cognitively managed introduction of stories, poems, and even novels helps students overcome this misapprehension before it sets in. Their expertise can be divorced from the fear that they must master all the textual material before comprehension can occur. Because teacher guidance is critical in early stages and because the stages themselves need to be practiced as learning strategies, such reading must, initially, be structured as an in-class activity.[2]

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Although the examples below show how to read texts with beginning FL students, the practices recommended here for in-class introduction of reading assignments are applicable for advanced readers as well. These techniques do not separate the act of reading from the act of joining a language community—comprehension and production are linked activities. In the section that follows, I illustrate this claim with a short literary text written in Spanish.

A Case Study in the Pedagogy of Strong Reading

In even a first semester Spanish class, Enrique Anderson-Imbert's (1976) short tale, *La Muerte*, can be introduced as both a literary work and a template for language use (for full text, see Appendix A). Plan for about ten minutes of group activity described below with follow-up stages of homework and a subsequent class- or small-group activity for perhaps fifteen to twenty minutes. Along with having students comprehend the story, teachers might want them to identify and use particular grammar features recently introduced such as adjective endings or verb forms. They would want to integrate such emphases, however, with particular literary features of the story, such as its repetitive or striking language or its use of motifs from established literary traditions. Such activities combine teaching language while at the same time preparing students to undertake strong or independent readings at the upper division level (Kern 1989).

Using such prereading activities, that gap between lower and upper division can be negotiated with a careful look at the "literary techniques" of the story itself. The tale is an example of what the author describes as an everyday, plausible, and familiar situation into which the fantastic can be interjected to cast light on the human condition and the absurd nature of the cosmos (Anderson-Imbert 1979, p. 43).[3] The point of a prereading activity that capitalizes on such expert background knowledge is, of course, not to tell students what to think about the story, but to have them uncover the fantastic in the text in ways that acknowledge what it says to them in conjunction with the objective facts of language use.

To restate, then, teacher guidance and feedback must avoid providing "expert" information but, at the same time, set up a playing field on which students can discover that information for themselves and (re)construct the practices that will enable them, in time, to become strong readers. Particularly when directed at considering options central to engaging in a fruitful reading, the class activity should, thus, first employ verbalized responses to what is understood,

partially understood, or guessed at, to help readers identify the process of meaning-making anchored in textual information. If just introducing these techniques in the first semester, the teacher may want to use English initially. After clarifying procedures and goals (one or two sessions), the switch to Spanish should pose no problems.

The Reading Input ("r + 1") of Prereading The directed reading-thinking activity (DRTA) (Stauffer, 1969) is the basic technique for such a feedback-oriented, in-class reading. It offers all the advantages of having teachers provide prereading explanations without having teachers assume the dominant reader role in making those explanations for their students, thereby denying them a strong reading opportunity. Instead, directed reading encourages students to think out loud about what they expect to read and to compare that expectation with the text title or initial paragraph they have just read, an established research strategy that reveals what they know, what they don't, and what they misread or fail to grasp as a result.

Designed to distinguish pure speculation from text-based inferences, directed reading asks students to express their thinking about how a text presents information, confirming and disconfirming what has been said and to make predictions about forthcoming information. A true exercise in reader response in the sense of Iser (1981), this pedagogical approach has no "right" or "wrong" answers because it honors any attempt to draw meaning from the text that is based on any facet of language practice or background knowledge (Carrell 1991). If empowered by students' preexisting knowledge, directed reading allows them to exercise agency, to verbalize their comprehension of text meaning without anxiety about right and wrong answers, and to receive immediate feedback from peers or the instructor to confirm or disconfirm that thinking.

To implement directed reading, the teacher simply asks students to first read the title, then the first paragraph or two, pausing after each title, subtitle, or paragraph to give readers time to make notes about, consult, or simply respond immediately to what they think the segment just read has said, substantiating those views by referring to language in the text. Depending on the teacher's goals, students may also be asked to identify what genre they are reading or what stylistic or linguistic features strike them. On the basis of everyone's observations and the teacher's minimal comments when questions arise, students will then predict what they think will be said in a subsequent paragraph. Commonly, the class as a whole makes at least three or four predictions, only one of which will be subsequently confirmed and possibly modified after further reading.

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The title of the story in question, *La Muerte* will elicit even from beginners responses such as "death," "dying," "murder" or possibly some misreadings such as "corpse" [*el muerto*], "sign," or "face" [*la muestra*]. The act of eliminating any initial misreadings will help focus student attention in subsequent reading, an important step towards fostering a strong reader because misreadings made at the outset have been shown to persist as interference factors when the reader progresses through a passage (Bernhardt 1990).

Once students identify that the title has yielded options in a general field of meaning from "death" or "murder," they can read the first paragraph together on a transparency or computer screen to see whether it offers clues for choosing one particular definition over the other and what additional ideas establish the setting or scenario for either meaning. While reading from a book or xerox copy is also effective, the focus on a screen provides immediate pinpointing of what students identify as important in the text. To exemplify, the first paragraph of *La Muerte* and typical responses are illustrated below:

> La automovilista (negro el vestido, negro el pelo, negros los ojos, pero con la cara tan pálida que a pesar del mediodía parecía que en su tez se hubiese dentenido un relámpago) la automovilista vio en el camino a una muchacha que hacía señas para que parara. Paró (p. 47).
>
> [The driver (black her dress, black her hair, black her eyes, but her face so pale that despite the noonday sun it looked as though it had been struck by lightning) saw on the road a young girl who was signaling her to stop. She stopped.][4]

Importantly, the teacher reminds students to work with what they know rather than to worry about what is unfamiliar. Beginners, for example, will not recognize several verb forms, such as the past perfect subjunctive of the auxiliary "to have" [*haber/hubiese*], the imperfect of "to appear" [*parecer/parecía*], or the preterite form of "to see" [*ver/vio*], but should have no trouble identifying the presence of a vehicle with a driver [*la automovilista*] and descriptors of the driver's appearance—black clothes, black hair, black eyes [*negro el vestido, negro el pelo, negros los ojos*] or relatively common nouns such as *el camino* [street or road] and *una muchacha* [a girl or young woman]. Some may even know the verb *parar* [to stop]. They probably will, moreover, sense something odd in the repetition and position of "negro" in the parenthetical phrase as echoing ritual language, not characteristic of normal speech rhythm.

Research findings suggest such tasks prove efficacious for retention of language (Hulstijn 1992). Students' comments typical of those

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documented in "think-alouds" (research that asks students how they decide about text meanings while reading) often reveal that readers learn through puzzling out words in context (Hosenfeld 1977). If the students are true beginners (i.e., in their first semester exposure to the language), those observations will probably be in English. Teachers can expect comments such as "an *automovilista* is a car or a driver, maybe a woman driver"; "the driver is dressed in black"; and "I think there's a girl on the road." With a record of assertions on a transparency or the blackboard, teachers can prompt other students to agree, disagree, or elaborate.

By waiting until the class has pooled its knowledge, teachers have several pedagogical advantages. First, they know what the class as a whole knows and does not know. Second, they have focused attention based on their students' cognitive processing and hence maintain those students' interest in resolving remaining anomalies as they continue reading ("read on to decide whether *la automovilista* is a vehicle or a driver"). Finally, such teachers have begun to model how an interpretation is constructed, not an interpretation itself.

Rather than continuing to read to resolve anomalies or puzzling information, the teacher may, depending on her pedagogical goals and the text itself, choose in subsequent sessions to ask the class to reread. If her goal is to highlight the value of functional grammar, a brief reminder that often the feminine ending accompanies noun gender addresses any questions about whether the driver of the car is a man or a woman.

To emphasize stylistic features, the instructor might want students to look again for redundancies: "qué se repite?" [what's repeated?]. The "negro el vestido, negro el pelo" [black her dress, black her hair] etc. will doubtless resonate with some students as a trope of folksongs or ballads in their own culture as well. ("Black, black, black is the color of my true love's hair.") In this way a grammatical exercise has functioned, in essence, as the basis for identifying a literary trope.

The "r + 1" of Confirming the Known Whether asking students to reread or to continue reading for specific points, the teacher's objective will be to establish what is known, what is not known, and, on that basis, to encourage predictions about what will happen next—the reader response processes identified by literary critics (e.g., Rosenblatt 1983). Reading on in *La Muerte*, students will discover that it remains unclear whether the reference is to a death or a murder, whether the driver is a man or a woman. On the other hand, they will probably see that *la automovilista* is a person because she talks with *una muchacha*.

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Again, rather than telling students the two people are talking to one another, student discovery of this key conversation at the heart of the story can be facilitated by the teacher. No need may exist to clarify this point as the subsequent verbal exchanges between driver and girl reveal as much. If the shift in narrative mode remains unclear, however, highlighting the question of narrative style clarifies whether or not an *automovilista* is a person and whether or not the driver has stopped. As is so often the case in literary works, obscure or peculiar grammar converges with narrative manipulation.

If, for example, students have been directed to look at the first paragraph as (a) a monologue (b) a description in the first person (c) a dialogue (d) a third person description, their continued reading can determine whether that description, dialogue, or monologue continues or not. A portion of the text illustrates the distinction between the first paragraph and the following exchanges:

> —¿Me llevas? Hasta el pueblo, no más —dijo la muchacha.
> —Sube —dijo la automovilista . . . (p. 48).
>
> ["Will you give me a ride? Only as far as the village," said the girl.
> "Get in," said the driver. . . .]

The dashes and question marks in the text illustrate Spanish type-setting conventions that differ from those commonly used in English language texts. Their brevity and the repetition of *dijo* [he/she said] conveys the sense of a dialogue even if students are unable to identify the preterite form of the verb "to say" as *decir* or "get in" as the imperative form of *subir*.

When teachers focus on what their students know, even novice FL learners can confirm or disconfirm predictions. At the same time, they are learning not to stop reading or to rely on a dictionary because of uncertainties that cannot be resolved outside the text taken as a structure. They experience the value of continuing in order to see if subsequent paragraphs clarify what was unclear in previous passages. They are also learning that, in literary texts particularly, initial paragraphs often introduce rather than explicate. First speeches of plays, initial paragraphs of stories, early pages of novels set the stage but rarely identify overtly all the theatrical props that will be essential in Acts Two and Three.

The "r + 1" of Pattern Identification in a Matrix-Guided Reading. After monitored feedback on their initial reading, the class is ready for rereading (a second, more informed reading) to establish the discourse pattern of the text as a semantic system. I recommend students

use a matrix schema at this juncture because matrices enable reading that reconstructs textual meaning as a visual pattern. Without such a matrix, students have little recourse but to believe they must understand every word in the text before they can "read." The illusion that "understanding every word" yields a meaningful reading is difficult to break without a matrix. Here a word of explication is in order.

A text matrix helps students comprehend the valence or syntax between central or macropropositions formulated by the instructor in the process of prereading and the supporting, elaborating details or micropropositions in the text (Kintsch and van Dijk 1978). Macropropositions are the "main ideas" or gist features of any story—the tokens of heroism, villainy, nurturing—the compass points of human experience. Thus each macroproposition has a topic (fairy princes) and a comment about its nature, goals, or results (rescue princesses). Micropropositions provide the details, the latitude and longitude found when those compass points are identified—the kinds of heroism or villainy fairy princes encounter and how they deal with such obstacles to rescuing their princesses.

For beginners, a partial "fill in the blank" matrix helps students to sort details of textual information (the micropropositions) in ways that foreground their relationship to macropropositions and the language used to express those relations. In the example below, the tokens or macropropositional categories are in bold; the typological details or micropropositions provided by the instructor are italicized; the items to be completed by the students are in block type.

This matrix displays macropropositions as tokens of a binary reading of Anderson-Imbert's (1976) text. Binary readings such as the

Matrix for *La Muerte*

Scenes	Familiar	Unexpected
Picking up a hitchhiker	la automovilista [woman driver]	*negro,negro, negros, pálida* [black, black, black, pale]
Conversing	*varias preguntas* [various questions]	Tres veces: "¿pero no tienes miedo...?" "no tengo miedo" etc. [Three times: "But aren't you afraid?" "I am not afraid" etc.]
Dying	el auto se desbarrancó, la muchacha quedó muerta [the automobile crashed; the girl lay dead]	*voz cavernosa, automovilista desapareció* [cavernous or sonorous voice; driver disappeared or vanished]

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one illustrated here (in this case using a binary "familiar/unfamiliar" behaviors comparison) are generally most informative because they follow a topic/comment logic for textual data—the behaviors, problems, institutions, ideas, persons or events talked about and the contrasts, solutions, features, goals, or causally related events that illuminate the topic's significance. These constitute the most basic forms of propositions (Kintsch 1998).

If reflecting a valid theoretical grasp of the text's macropropositions, even readers with minimal command of the FL will be able to use the matrix to understand a given passage's conceptual fundamentals and to supplement the gaps in their understanding of details of fact or language. Consequently, an instructor's theoretically anchored matrix construction helps students read for meaning without extensive command of language. The matrix for *La Muerte* applied semiotic theory by contrasting a familiar scenario with its attendant supernatural features. That contrast, a central axis of magical realism in Latin American fiction, illuminates the sign system of Anderson-Imbert's (1976) text.

To illustrate the narrower case of how matrix building can foster language learning, consider the grid above not only in terms of answers provided, but also in terms of potential answers, including inappropriate ones, that might well be added in actual practice. Under the category "unfamiliar," for example, some readers might erroneously suggest *¿Me llevas?* [will you take me/give me a ride?] as an example of an unexpected exchange between a driver and a hitchhiker.

If, for example, classmates do not object to the inclusion of *¿Me llevas?* in the "unfamiliar" category, the instructor will need to point out the meaning of the verb *llevar* as "to carry; take" and ask the class to speculate about a probable translation in this context. Once students have understood the verb meaning, the question *¿Me llevas?* [will you give me a ride?] will be reconsidered for the "familiar" category. By associating the question with its appropriate referential system, the micromeanings of individual words are linked to the macropropositions of the passage. Because students make these distinctions to clarify global meanings, memory of the specific meanings of words should be facilitated (Hulstijn 1992).

When the matrix is used for a homework assignment, rather than in-class work or small group efforts to be reported on, then email consultation or a chat room format is useful to continue the strategies of puzzling out how macropropositions operate as larger systems—they can also help students pool their knowledge about the Spanish language. The more words that are used and thought about in such an environment, the greater likelihood of their retention. Regardless of the

specific matrix format, student efforts to construct this level of proposition in a foreign language need to be reviewed and discussed as legitimate stages in the process of more complete comprehension. Discussion of misreadings is useful to clarify language use and reinforce ways in which micropropositions support or fail to support one column of main meaning in the matrix.

To repeat, this feedback function, while essential, must emphasize the validity of student effort in thinking about macropropositional meaning rather than focusing solely on dictionary definitions of words or details without regard to the gist of the text. The imperfect reader who is actively constructing propositional systems must still be valorized as a potentially strong receiver of a literary work. Cognitive engagement, identified in research as essential for success in reading comprehension, lays the foundation for identifying the associative strategies the text uses to "mean" (Kintsch 1998).

If students are to read for the global structure of a text (its macrosyntax) and its main meaning, and, if their goal is to acquire language as well as information from that reading, these goals must transcend concern about initial missteps based on insufficient command of language features. Most of us have misread first as well as second language texts. L1 and L2 research strongly suggests that we become better only through extensive reading that focuses on textual concepts rather than our personal responses to that language (Block 1986). Consequently, the matrix task of reproducing a text's micropositions, its surface language arranged in associative schemata, will be the basis for subsequent tasks that guide students in thinking about the text and expressing that thinking.

The "r + 1" of Articulatory Stages: The Strong Reader Becomes an Authoritative Interpreter Once the matrix has been completed and verified in the classroom, several recycling options exist for the next growth stage to be introduced. Which option will, again, depend on instructional goals. If language practice and a graduated sequence leading to sophisticated written expression are considered desirable, then students can manipulate the language patterns they have found in their matrices, first at the sentence, or possibly even at the paragraph level. They can, for example, write more dialogue between the characters they have met, exchanges reflecting those characters' voices and modes of being.

To ensure practice in sentence building as part of this propositional logic, matrix information must be cued to students' existing command of grammar. Presuming that beginners have been introduced to the ways to use the present tense forms for the verbs "to

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have" in Spanish [*tener/haber*], the verbs "to be" [*estar/ser*], and matching of gender endings for nouns and adjectives, these students can be instructed to use their matrices to describe the two figures or objects mentioned in the story. They can be instructed to decide which verbs the text uses for "to have" and "to be" and then to think about which of these forms (*tener* and *estar)* are appropriate for their present tense descriptions.

Anchored first in semantics, the drill automatically acquires a morphological component when based on the story's language use. The story itself uses present tense forms of *tener* and *estar* several times, but only in the first and second person. In their descriptions, students take a first step away from repeating the exact language of the text—the linguistic task of the matrix—to talking about the text in the third person. At the same time, any nouns and adjectives used will be drawn from their matrices and observations about those parts of speech must be anchored in the content of the story. Typical answers will be *La automovilista tiene ojos negros* [The driver has black eyes] and *La automobilista no tiene miedo* [The driver is not afraid]. One set of linguistic material thus achieves new dimensions as several different affective purposes—as expressions of reader intent as well as reader recall.

Despite the relatively limited linguistic repertoire of a first-year class, instructors will discover that students prove to be indefatigable players with language and can, if asked to do so, write from six to eight simple sentences using the format above. They might then be ready to write a longer description that contrasts the familiar with the unfamiliar using discourse connectors such as *pero* [but] or *y* [and]. Given the topic sentence, "This story is/is not very mysterious because. . . ." students have the linguistic tools to express a point of view (e.g., *Este cuento es/no es muy misterioso porque la muchacha tiene muchas preguntas peculiares pero la automovilista no tiene miedo* [This story is/is not very mysterious because the young girl asks many peculiar questions but the driver is not afraid]). And they practice the speech act while optimizing their linguistic resources.

For more advanced students, these steps may strike some teachers as too minimal, too redundant to avoid the status of busy work, a concern that will depend largely on the incremental learning an instructor builds into the task by developing elaborated scenarios. The challenge posed by asking students to change verbs from the indicative to the conditional or to introduce negation will depend on the conceptual material those students are poised to master actively, the "+1" of their particular learning level. In minimally revising simple statements as illustrated above, students are practicing their skill in

expressing their own point of view. They practice becoming strong readers who are also articulate readers.

Such practice links meaning to grammar features in the spirit of research that argues for the importance of focus on the communicative function of form (e.g., Doughty 1998 and VanPatten 1996). Students engage in an essential intermediary step between comprehension and the kind of text-based, creative language expression that can become literary interpretation. The usual grammar exercises do not contextualize language practice as part of systematic interpretation and reading. Instead, most reading exercises remain unrelated to the messages of a literary text. Small wonder when students guided only by such strategies prove unable to discuss texts at more sophisticated levels. They have been denied the building blocks necessary to achieve sophisticated expression. Even if they have adequate language skills, they do not have the reference tools of larger proposition building with which to ask such questions and begin to develop interpretations.

To be sure, part of their failure to interpret originates in language deficits. Without intermediary practice stages with building-block vocabulary and expressive options, students often resort to English or, particularly in writing about a literary work, to translation from English idioms. Said more practically, they have not practiced modifying textual language to create individual speech acts. Cognitively, reading the text amounts, under such circumstances, to reading input + $\frac{2}{3}$ or + 3, because the tasks of synthesizing new vocabulary, new grammar features, and new narrative information overwhelms learners as a threefold burden, only two of which can be alleviated by language practice per se.

Ultimately, the kind of task redundancy described above can be interesting only as long as it is not purely mechanical. To forestall mechanical drill, creative tasks that underpin even simple uses of language can prevent boredom while reworking language materials. The point is to have students repeat language but vary the task in ways meaningful and consistent with the pedagogy of those students' learning program—to practice the kinds of grammar, discourse, and propositions that they will, at the end of their study, be required to provide.

After the grammar framework for these appropriate expressions is established and validated at the sentence level (tense, mood, voice, morphosyntactic complexity such as appropriate use of verb condition, adjective endings, negation or whatever the + 1 focus), students are poised to use the texts as the basis for self-expression. They can interpret the work through themselves or their own minds through it.

Command of textual language at the sentence level thus must translate into command of more extended discourse. Such dictates

will, of course, depend on the pedagogical objectives of the teacher and the desired juncture between practices at the lower- and upper-division levels. Students can, for example, move toward various styles of proficiency if they repeatedly retell stories read in lower division courses, reproduce them as mini-dramas, provide variant stories using the original's themes and stylistic devices, conduct mock interviews of figures in stories, submit police reports, or express a point of view in a written paragraph or short essay.

In lower-division courses, complex speaking and writing tasks such as those just indicated succeed best when preceded by sentence-level practice linked to the propositional meanings of specific reading materials. With sentence-level practice based on discourse patterns in those materials, the story grammar and the matrix for the story provide a safety net for students' linguistic accuracy by setting limits on linguistic innovation and innovation's attendant high risk of introducing dictionary-based infelicities or translation-based anglicisms.

The "r + 1" of Reading the Matrix for Textual Implications I have been arguing that reading and expression are tied to the construction of literary interpretation. In constructing the topic/comment or binary system of the matrix for *La Muerte*, the instructor has designed tasks for identifying student comprehension of the story and constructed a feedback network to confirm readings that reflect the text and its language and to disconfirm extraneous or inaccurate readings. As we have seen, those matrices then operate as the basis for enabling students to take (1) a first step towards communication of minimal language manipulations that reflect the macropropositions of the text and (2) a second step towards more extended variants of those macropropositions.

On completing these stages, students are ready to address the task of interpreting textual meaning on their terms—applying that school of theory or interpretation they deem most suitable for the text or their reader's goals. To this point in time, readers have used their matrices to understand the Anderson-Imbert (1976) story in truncated, linear terms. They have read the binary oppositions as contrasting semiotic patterns. To interpret the story, to identify what the micropropositions "add up to," they must now read their matrices vertically, as well.

To undertake a vertical reading, the familiar features, drivers of cars who ask questions and have car crashes in which their passengers are killed, must be interrogated as much for what they do not say as what they do (what they defer), how they differ from other reports of such events in newspapers or on TV (in attitude, in formal features).

The same must be done for the second column with its strange questions, cavernous voices, and disappearing drivers.

Because vertical reading of the matrix involves higher order analytical skills, no additional linguistic demands should be made on students. They have to learn to generalize (to use details or tokens to illustrate gist or typologies). As illustrated, however, the language necessary to express the differences between the two columns is rarely complex. Most students who complete a matrix for *La Muerte* will see that none of the references to people in the "familiar" column are personalized with names or other specific identities. The driver and the girl remain types rather than particular persons—all insights that involve no more than simple sentences in Spanish. In this sense students will, in other words, begin to construct distinctions between realism and magical realism.

The second column reveals how this absence of the personal blurs even further because of difficulties in keeping track of who is speaking to whom, particularly when, immediately after the driver repeats for the third time that she is not afraid, laughter is suppressed and a cavernous voice declares itself to be death. Only the early, ballad-like description of the driver ("black the eyes, black the hair, black the clothing") and the driver's repeated answer foreshadows her threatening potential as a personification of death—adding up to a domain that evokes magic.

The realization that that potential will prove supernatural, however, has been postponed until the last sentence of the story, when the driver is described as stepping (out of the car) firmly or unscathed and vanishing behind a cactus [*siguió a pie y al llegar a un cactus desapareció*]. If realized and expressed by students themselves, such insights convey their grasp of narrative nuances and, possibly, their affective pleasure in an aesthetic reading of this text. For rank beginners, these insights that synthesize the verbal movement of the matrix chart will probably be most productively expressed in English (see part 3 of Appendix B). But before many months of exposure to the language have elapsed, students should be able to do precisely that kind of synthesis while using Spanish.

Students who mention the story's pattern of presenting the real and the magical through typecast characters rather than particular people have uncovered one key to interpreting Anderson-Imbert's (1979) aesthetic in this short work. They will probably do so in a variety of ways. Some may recognize that the narrative system, juxtaposing as it does the everyday with the surreal, suggests generalizations about attitudes and behaviors. In this case, a young girl possesses the bravado and dangerously overconfident daring typical of youth.

Others may be aware of Anderson-Imbert's tendency toward expressionistic style with its reductive gesture toward basic human experience—hence echoes of ballads and fairy tales in the descriptions and in the repetition of questions often found in these genres. Yet others may simply wonder why the young girl keeps asking the driver uncomfortable and, by implication, intimidating questions. Moreover, who is asking whom may not be immediately clear unless the sequence of the conversation is carefully established—itself an important, and frequently overlooked, strategy for determining agency in a literary text. In the case of Anderson-Imbert (1976) the omission of explicit references to speakers underscores the subtle ways the author evokes uncertainty in the reader.

Any such responses read a story matrix of the familiar and the unfamiliar as vertical as well as horizontal patterns because they penetrate beneath the surface information of the text in a linear reading (the horizontal syntax of their matrices) to the subtext of themes and authorial intentionality. What is Anderson-Imbert implying by playing this series of little tricks on the reader? What do these narrative ploys add up to and how does the reader respond to his or her initial assumptions or questions about the story at the outset of reading (Is the reference to *muerte* one of death or murder? Is the young girl a victim or indirectly complicit in her death and if so, how?). Whether the answers are searched for in-class with directed reading or at home applying this and other strategies learned in class, students are now prepared to think about and argue their own views. Such acts of synthesis begin to be literary interpretations.

For the teacher of strong readers, no "right" answers exist for these paradoxical or anomalous tendencies of the text. Indeed, the teacher must stress that the questions themselves initiate interpretation, that reading literature involves the reader's interrogation of the text's underlying messages and appreciation of how those messages are constructed through consistent patterns in its surface language. No participant expects absolute consensus about *the* meaning of a literary text (*the* right answer), only right processes of reading its multiple dimensions. After a systematic and careful reading of any literary work, readers have earned the privilege of deciding what those patterns say to them, of drawing inferences and articulating implications. As long as their questions are text-based and their answers intelligible, student insights at this stage should be honored.

The "r + 1" of Values and Literary Texts For initial reading of literary texts at early stages in language instruction, teachers will probably conclude discussion or written work about a story by dealing with stu-

dent inferences about "how" a text means. For more advanced learners in the second or third levels, however, an additional stage will probably be considered essential: the stage that explores the significance of a text in a larger frame of reference.

Any text, and particularly literary ones, can be analyzed as significant with regard to multiple text-extrinsic dimensions: as reflections of timeless truths, particular social or political issues, as cultural documents, or as well-wrought urns of great beauty. The teacher who wants to prepare students for more advanced literary analysis will probably encourage them to consider one or more of these dimensions. Is this story an example of magical realism? Or is it a distinct sub-genre of the fantastic as some critics would have it? Are such stories distinctly Latin American in origin or are there parallels in English or other literatures with which students are familiar? Alternatively, with increased emphasis in many curricula on cultural studies and content-based coursework in a foreign language, such literary texts can be read in conjunction with other cultural documents to encourage students to reflect about multiple facets of given social problems or attitudes.

A variety of textual combinations will foster such goals. To move from reading to research to interpretation, one must move from a text to intertextuality. Parallel fictional and nonfictional accounts of the same events or subject matter can exemplify how literature lends meaning to real-world experience, pedagogically sound choices from the standpoint of L2 research because such comparisons work with redundant vocabulary and contexts. Parallel accounts can, depending on the goals of the course, be from the L1 or the L2 culture. As a case in point, the teacher might select a Spanish- or English-language text about the incidence of fatal accidents among different age groups in the United States. Readers of *La Muerte* might then be poised to consider youthful attitudes of invincibility as promoting disregard for risk illustrated in Anderson-Imbert's (1976) tale—a sociological reading rather than the aesthetic one foregrounded in the tasks illustrated above.

If the course goals stress cultural dimensions, a parallel text might depict social conditions in the Argentinian countryside and the practice of hitchhiking as a socially accepted means of transportation—the reasons for this acceptance and the reasons why hitchhiking is now relatively rare in the United States and increasingly so in Latin America. Student attention would be drawn to economic differences (the greater likelihood of car ownership in the United States, the banning of hitchhikers on North American and Pan American highways) and their impact on social praxis and cultural attitudes.

Should aesthetic features be emphasized, fictional and nonfictional accounts of a hitchhiker's experience could still be compared—but with a different goal in mind, that of distinguishing between literary conventions and the generally more prosaic accounts of actual events. Here, then, the emphasis would be on differences in how information is conveyed and the aesthetic objectives underlying ambiguity in Anderson-Imbert's (1976) story and disambiguity in a newspaper account.

Literature and Language Learning as Allies

I have tried to demonstrate how the teaching of an unknown language in beginning language instruction can be a natural ally in teaching students to become strong readers of a FL or L2, readers who can identify the topic of a literary or nonliterary text: whether it focuses primarily on people, events, ideas, or institutions. Many texts written in western European languages express their dominant themes in initial paragraphs—if not directly, then by implications shared among the literatures of western countries.

Reading for those implications is a matter of practice—assessment of topic and narrative strategies in developing that topic. Consequently, as has been emphasized here, reading literature as a classroom activity for beginning FL learners involves a wide range of acceptability concerning textual messages and relations between textual messages. The instructional goal must not be to find an absolute truth about the text but to establish a focus of attention that gets students looking at what is there in terms of the language. Only these processes turn students of any language into strong readers.

Whether in the first paragraph of a short text such as the one discussed above or the first chapter of the novel, information must be gleaned in stages. Where students misread or disagree, individual, group, or class work with textual language can resolve resultant uncertainties. To become strong readers, students need to learn that judgments about main characters emerge only after they as readers register the ideas that characters express, the events with which they are involved, and the class structures or institutions they represent. For teachers unfamiliar with how to construct such matrices, the yardstick is simply what works—which binary systems yield interesting and informative ideas about the text. As a rule, for realistic literary texts about people, one matrix grid that generally proves useful involves a column for what people do and a column for how they do it or what they say about doing it and to whom.

Key to the pedagogy of teaching literature presented here, for all initial task stages, whether prereading, reading, rereading, or articulating meaning, teachers ask students to look at what the text says, not what they, the teachers, think it says or interpret it as saying. In other words, teaching the strong reader involves designing tasks that have readers use textual language as the basis for expressing what the text says.

The length or type of literature read should depend on a combination of student background and interests coupled with program goals. As an initial exercise that bridges "reading" and "interpretation," the instructional approach outlined in this paper has the further advantage of identifying the "who, what, why, where," the semantics of the text during initial stages of reading. The larger propositional syntax, the "how" and "why," have been bracketed, are "offsides" so to speak, prior to students' development of a matrix.

That postponement, the delay in introducing how and why, eases the FL reader's cognitive load. Answers to why and how questions involve the difficult analytical issues that, unless rooted in command of textual language with which to express relationships, lead students into subjective tangents rather than inferences based on textual material. Initially, therefore, reader attention should focus on semantics. It is the teacher who must provide analytic schemata for syntactic relationships by helping students identify a logical pattern in textual information—setting up the grid for student execution of a matrix assignment. That grid, in turn, will be the basis both for using textual language in spoken or written expression (the linear or horizontal reading of the matrix) and in drawing inferences about what that text means to them (the vertical reading of the matrix).

By establishing what the text says to them on the text's terms (the binary grid of the matrix), students can clarify for themselves and others the difference between what the text says and what they think it says. The space between text statement and reader perception of text statement is identified and becomes available for objective consideration. This availability is essential if students are going to learn to recreate the content of a story or the thinking of figures in literary works. And those are essential abilities for teachers who want their students to appreciate what a text probably said to its original audiences as well as what it says to them as nonnative speakers of that audience's language—whether those students are reading the work in the original or in translation.

If students read foreign language literature without strategies such as those outlined here, research in reading comprehension suggests that what happens is often counterproductive (e.g., Bernhardt and Kamil 1995). Students take pieces of information from texts with

which they are unfamiliar or uncomfortable and either distort them (misreading) or fail to note their presence. A proactive pedagogy, having students identify the unfamiliar or uncomfortable moments in the text helps them to register the presence of difference. From that point it is a relatively small step to interpolate such differences as significant if they develop into a pattern of contrasting or causally related details that inform larger categories such as "familiar" and "unfamiliar." As the illuminating parts of the initially obscure whole, these details emerge in a matrix as tokens of typologies, of species or subsets of a genus, of reader-detected micropropositions that construct the text's macropropositional meaning.

Once students are aware of such possible discrepancies between their expectations and the information in the literary work, they can establish the consciousness from which to explore the text as Other, the *automovilista* of Anderson-Imbert's (1976) story as the reality of the mind that literature can transform into the reality of the physical world. When that process starts early in a FL course sequence and is continued as a central strategy for comprehending and articulating meaning, literature can be integrated seamlessly and happily into language acquisition.

Notes

1. I am indebted to my colleagues Dr. Sharon Foerster and Marike Janzen for their assistance with the Spanish language use in this paper and Dr. Katherine Arens and two anonymous reviewers for their editorial suggestions.

2. For suggestions about appropriate in-class reading activities and related assignments, see Kern, 2000, pp. 129–69; for detailed lesson plans used in integrating reading tasks into a first semester German language sequence, see Maxim 1999, Appendix I, pp. 332–94.

3. In the author's words, the story "reveladora del carácter humano y también de la naturaleza absurda del cosmos. . . ."

4. This and all subsequent translations are the author's.

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APPENDIX A

LA MUERTE
Enrique Anderson-Imbert

La automovilista (negro el vestido, negro el pelo, negros los ojos, pero con la cara tan pálida que a pesar del mediodía parecía que en su tez se hubiese detenido un relámpago) la automovilista vio en el camino a una muchacha que hacía señas para que parara. Paró.

—¿Me llevas? Hasta el pueblo, no más –dijo la muchacha

—Sube —dijo la automovilista. Y el auto arrancó a toda velocidad por el camino que bordeaba la montaña.

—Muchas gracias —dijo la muchacha, con un gracioso mohín— pero ¿no tiene miedo de levantar por el camino a personas desconocidas? Podrían hacerte daño. ¡Esto está tan desierto!

—No, no tengo miedo.

—¿Y si levantas a alguien que te atraca?

—No tengo miedo

—¿Y si te matan?

—No tengo miedo.

—No? Permíteme presentarme —dijo entonces la muchacha, que tenía los ojos grandes, límpidos, imaginativos. Y, en seguida, conteniendo la risa, fingió una voz vernosa—. Soy la Muerte, la M-u-e-r-t-e.

La automovilista sonrió misteriosamente.

En la próxima curva el auto se desbarrancó. La muchacha quedó muerte entre las piedras. La automovilista siguió a pie y al llegar a un cactus desapareció.

DEATH

The driver (black her dress, black her hair, black her eyes, but her face so pale that despite the noonday sun it looked as though it had been struck by lightning) saw on the road a young girl who was signaling her to stop. She stopped.

"Will you give me a ride? Only as far as the village," said the girl.

"Get in," said the driver. And the car took off at high speed down the road along the side of the mountain.

"Thank you very much," said the girl, with a gracious gesture, "but aren't you afraid to pick up strangers? Someone might hurt you. It's so deserted here!"

"No, I'm not afraid."

"What if you pick up someone who robs you?"

"I'm not afraid."

"What if they try to kill you?"

"I'm not afraid."

"No? Then allow me to introduce myself," the girl responded; she had large eyes, limpid, imaginative, And therewith, suppressing her laughter, she simulated a sonorous voice. "I am Death, D-E-A-T-H."

The driver smiled uncannily.

At the next curve the car crashed. The girl lay dead among the rocks. The driver emerged from the car unscathed, walked away, and alongside a cactus, vanished.

APPENDIX B

Assignment format for precis—Katherine Arens and Janet Swaffar

There is a difference between a text's facts and the strategy used to present those facts. A "precis" (*pray-see*) reflects this difference. It is designed to reflect the structure of a text's argument, not just a set of notes on the text's contents. A precis is one typed page long.

No matter what type, a precis has three sections:

1) A statement about the text's **FOCUS**. This is the main issue that the text addresses.

   ***You write* a concise statement (1–2 sentences) of that focus.
   Likely alternatives:
   -issues or problems
   -representative concerns of a group or its interlocked set of beliefs
   -institutions/systems
   -events and their characteristics or repercussions

   e.g.: "The structure of the mind and how it relates to behavior in the social world."

   What <u>not</u> to do: Do not include journalistic commentary, or examples, or evaluations – just state what the topic is.

2) A statement of **LOGIC** and **GOAL** (its **Intent**), which will introduce a **CHART WITH HEADINGS** encompassing the text's data in two parallel columns of notes (usually with page references to the reading).

   ***You write* a sentence describing the logic pattern (e.g., "By examining the sources of _____, the author shows the consequences of _____"; "In order to _____, the text correlates the _____ and _____ of social behaviors.")

   Typical verbs indicating such logic: compare, contrast, link causally, cause, follow from . . .

   ***After that, you write* two column headings creating classes of information which the author systematically correlates with each other. Under these headings, you typically add three or four examples which fit the content of the text into its form.

   Typical categories of information:
   - -characteristics of a model, role, event
   - -stages in an event or process
   - -sources, conditions, or restrictions on a context
   - -participants or interest groups
   - -effects, impact, consequences
   - -goals, purposes to be realized

3) A paragraph (ca. 3 sentences) indicating the **IMPLICATIONS** of the information pattern. This is <u>not</u> a description of the information pattern or focus, but rather an extension of the covert statement implied by the information and pattern. ***That is,*** what is this text/precis *good for*, especially as seen from the outside? In setting the argument up this way, what is being hidden, asserted, or brushed aside? What is new or old-fashioned about the correlations made? Who would profit most by this arrangement?

Note: Beginning FL students will soon be able to fill in the first two sections in the FL. The instructor may find it useful to have them complete part three in English to facilitate and cross-check readers' comprehension.

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